

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SAN SA 00222 162212Z
ACTION H-03

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R 162040Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6658
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
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USCINCSO

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SHUM, OVIP (DRINAN, FATHER ROBERT), ES
SUBJECT: CODEL DRINAN--REACTIONS TO FATHER DRINAN'S "PRIVATE"
VISIT

REF: SAN SALVADOR 0176

1. FATHER ROBERT DRINAN, A JESUIT PRIEST AND MEMBER OF CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF MASSACHUSETTS, VISITED EL SALVADOR DURING JANUARY 7-12. HIS VISIT WAS IDENTIFIED TO US A PRIVATE VISIT AND PRIVATELY FINANCED (STATE 310759). DURING FATHER DRINAN'S STAY, IT CAME TO APPEAR THAT THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SERVICE COMMITTEE WAS PROBABLY FINANCING THE TRIP.

2. FATHER DRINAN HAD TWO TRAVELLING COMPANIONS. JOHN MCAWARD, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OFR INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS OF THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SERVICE COMMITTEE, PRECEDED HIM BY

NEARLY ONE WEEK AND SPENT THAT WEEK ORGANIZAING THE PROGRAM FOR
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PAGE 02 SAN SA 00222 162212Z

FATHER DRINAN'S STAY. DR. THOMAS ANDERSON WHO ARRIVED WITH FATHER DRINAN IS A PROFESSOR AT EASTERN CONNECTICUT STATE COLLEGE, A SPECIALIST IN EL SALVADOR'S HISTORY, AND THE AUTHOR OF "MATANZA" A DEFINITUKE WORK ON THE 1932 COMMUNIST AND PEASANT REVOLT.

3. AS THE DEPARTMENT IS AWARE (REFTEL), FATHER DRINAN

AND PART SPENT A BUSY WEEK WHICH INCLUDED CONCELEBRATION OF MASS WITH ARCHBISHOP ROMERO, AN EXTENDED EMBASSY BRIEFING, MEETINGS WITH PRIESTS AND OTHER CLERGY, OPPOSITION POLITICIANS, LABOR LEADERS, PEASANTS, FAMILIES OF ALLEGED POLITICAL PRISONERS, GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS INCLUDING THE PRESIDENT, VICE PRESIDENT

AND SEVERAL MINISTERS, THE CELEBRATION OF A CLANDESTINE MASS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE, AND THE HOLDING OF A FINAL PRESS CONFERENCE. SINCE THEN, FATHER DRINAN HAS APPARENTLY HELD PRESS CONFERENCES

ALSO IN GUATEMALA AND WASHINGTON.

4. AS THE DEPARTMENT IS ALSO AWARE FROM REFTEL AND FROM THE PRESS CONFERENCE CONTENT, FATHER DRINAN HAS SPOKEN OF POL-

TICAL PRISONERS, TORTURE, PERSECUTION OF THE CHURCH, AND THE REPRESSIVE CHARACTER OF NEW LEGISLATION.

5. IN THIS SADLY POLARIZED COUNTRY, REACTION TO FATHER DRINAN'S VISIT HAD BEEN IMMEDIATE AND SHARP. HIS VISIT AND HIS WORDS HAVE BEEN WELCOMED BY THE OPPOSITION PRESS, BY THE FAMILIES OF THE ALLEGED POLITICAL PRISONERS, BY OPPOSITION POLITICIANS AND LABOR UNION LEADERS AND BY THAT PART OF THE CLERGY SUPPORTING ARCHBISHOP ROMERO (WHICH IF FATHER DRINAN IS CORRECT REPRESENTS THE TOTALITY OF THE CHURCH IN EL SALVADOR).

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PAGE 03 SAN SA 00222 162212Z

6. GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, ON THE OTHER HAND, HAVE BEEN PUBLICLY CRITICAL. THE MINISTER OF INTERIOR IS QUOTED IN THE PRESS AS CONTRASTING THE ATTITUDE OF MEMBERS OF THE VISITING GROUP FROM THE INTER-AMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (IAHRC) WITH THAT OF

OF FATHER DRINAN WHO, HE SAYS "ACTS UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF

PREJUDICE, IS AGGRESSIVE, FREQUENTLY RAISES HIS VOICE, AND MAKES ACCUSATIONS...." THE MINISTER COMPLAINS THAT FATHER DRINAN ASKS AGGRESSIVE QUESTIONS AND THEN COMMENTS ON THE REPLY IN

A WAY WHICH IGNORES THE INFORMATION GIVEN HIM. EVEN MORE SPECTACULAR WERE THE PUBLIC COMMENTS OF THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE WHO ACCUSED FATHER DRINAN OF LACKING EVEN ELEMENTARY RESPECT AND COURTESY FOR A FOREIGN GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL FULLY DISPOSED TO OFFER HIM EVERY COOPERATION. FATHER DRINAN, HE SAID, LED

OFF WITH A THREAT AGAINST EL SALVADOR, SHOWED NO DESIRE TO COUNTENANCE INFORMATION CONTRARY TO HIS INITIAL PREJUDICES, CENSURED

THE LEGAL SYSTEM OF THE NATION AND TREATED EL SALVADOR "AS THOUGH

IT WERE A COLONY OR PART OF THE TERRITORY OF THE UNITED STATES."
THE MINISTER CLOSED BY DRAWING AN ANALOGY TO THE DAYS OF COLON-
IALISM AND INVAISITION.

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